

[Home](#) / [The Internet Is Stalking Your Grandparents](#)

RECENT TWEETS

# THE INTERNET IS STALKING YOUR GRANDPARENTS

May 25, 2012 · by [Anne Halsey](#) · in [Public Service Announcement](#) · [Edit](#)

The Internet doesn't mean the same thing to everyone; the way we use it is defined, more than any other factor, by our age. And that defines the extent to which it uses *us*.

When Pew first started researching the [Internet in American life in 2000](#), socio-economic differences were the defining variable in whether and how people used the Internet. ISPs weren't willing to build out expensive broadband connections in low-income communities and without access, residents of lower income areas were less likely to go online at all. But that was twelve years, and many Internet lifetimes, ago! Today, [most adults are online](#) but not all, not by a long shot. Even with a proliferation of inexpensive Internet options, one in five adults in the US still doesn't use the Internet; and senior citizens are the least likely to be on the Internet. Age has become more important than poverty in determining whether someone is online.

Unlike younger adults, senior citizens are less likely to have had jobs that required Internet or email use. Even those who used the Internet professionally are less likely to communicate with friends via the Internet and may not see the need to have Internet at home.

Even if a senior citizen has never heard of Internet, that doesn't mean that the Internet has never heard of *them*. Personal information makes its way to the Internet through corporate, government and private channels, many of which gather their information offline initially. Once the information is online it's only a Google search away.

The result of all of this is that there is a large group of adults who may not know what information about them is online. Without that knowledge it is impossible to make an educated decision about whether you're comfortable with the world having access to your information.

It's tempting to think that just because our parents, grandparents, aunt, uncles and older neighbors can finish the Saturday New York Times crossword puzzle over breakfast that they know everything. Not spending any (let alone all) of their lives on the Internet wouldn't be a problem if the Internet were purely opt in, but the barriers between online and offline interactions are only getting weaker, and accessing the Internet has long since left the exclusive realm of computer programmers.



Now go ahead and call an older loved one, and check in with them about the last time *they* Googled themselves. If they're not familiar with the amount of [information they potentially have online](#), through people-search websites and data-brokers, take the time to educate them. As long as they choose not to be on the use the Internet help them avoid letting the Internet use them.

Halsey @pseudohalsey



Tags: digital divide, generation gaps, online data, Pew, privacy, Startup

## Leave a Reply

Logged in as [Samantha Leland](#). [Log out](#) →

[Post Comment](#) →

[← Google Just Nerfed Us, a Venture-Backed Startup](#)

[Don't Make Me Tell Congress On You... →](#)

---

[BLOG](#)

[ABOUT US](#)

[WORK WITH US](#)

[PRESS](#)

[PRIVACY POLICY](#)

[TERMS OF SERVICE](#)